DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 371 356 CS 214 359

AUTHOR Graves, Heather Brodie
TITLE The Subject as Reader and Writer: Teaching Composition Theory in a Traditional English Department.
PUB DATE Mar 94
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (45th, Nashville, TN, March 16-19, 1994).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Course Descriptions; *Course Objectives; Graduate Students; Graduate Study; Higher Education; Introductory Courses; *Writing (Composition)
IDENTIFIERS *Composition Theory; *Illinois State University; Literary Theory

ABSTRACT

This paper, a general introduction to composition class for graduate students (at Illinois State University) not all of whom are necessarily teaching composition at the time they are taking the course, is organized around Andrea Lunsford's categories in her essay "Rhetoric and Composition": questions about writers, questions about readers, questions about text, and questions about context. In examining "questions about writers" the course will focus on issues of difference (race, class and gender); readings will include bell hooks' "Talking Back," Gates' "The Signifying Monkey," and Kirsch's "Women Writing the Academy." In examining questions about readers or audience, readings will include Ong's "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction" and Porter's "Audience and Rhetoric." In examining questions about texts, readings will include LeFevre's "Invention as a Social Act, Crowley's "The Methodical Memory" and a series of articles on the rhetoric-as-epistemic debate to explore how writers invent their subject matter. In examining questions about contexts, readings will include Bullock and Trimbur's "The Politics of Writing Instruction: Postsecondary" and Faigley's "Fragments of Rationality, both of which will provide historical and political context--the material conditions in the field under which the other questions are being studied. The last three class meetings will be devoted to reading one article selected by each student during his or her research for the course paper. Students will also be required to keep a journal and formulate discussion questions based on their reading. (Includes course description and syllabus.) (TB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 371 356

Heather Brodie Graves

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
H. Graves

"The Subject as Reader and Writer: Teaching Composition Theory in a Traditional English Department."

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

I taught Introduction to Composition Studies at Illinois State University last fall, and I'm scheduled to teach it again this fall. I thought I'd share with you today the changes I'm considering for the fall. At Illinois State, we are on a 16-week semester system, and the graduate classes are held from 5:30 to 8:20 p.m. in the evenings. English 402, or Introduction to Composition Studies is a required course for incoming graduate students, so there are usually two or three sections every fall each taught by a different professor. Although we are free to choose our own texts, we are encouraged to use some of the same books so that students in different classes don't have wildly different visions of the field of composition. Most of the students in my section last fall were new M.A. students, working in English literature or creative writing. Because it was not a course in their major and they were taking it in conjunction with another required course (the dreaded literature library research course), they initially approached Intro. to Comp. Studies with less than optimum attitudes, a little disgruntled and mystified that rhetoric and composition could have anything to offer them. However, the fact that 95% of them were teaching a section of freshman composition for the first time also that term meant that once we started reading and talking about the issues, they started to see connections between the theory and their own classroom practice, and their attitudes began to improve fairly rapidly. The trick, however, was to keep class discussion from focusing entirely on their trials and tribulations in the classroom, since they did have a forum for that in another class, and there were two or three students in the class who weren't teaching English 101.

After a general introduction to the field and its history as represented in *A Short History of Writing Instruction* and *Introduction to Composition Studies*, I have organized the course more or less around Andrea Lunford's categories in the essay "Rhetoric and

CS 214 359

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Composition:" questions about writers, questions about readers, questions about text, and questions about context. I say "more-or-less" because research rarely confines itself clearly to one question or another: it often overlaps several categories. I chose this configuration over other possible ones because it is a simple schema for newcomers to the field, especially ones who are not necessarily highly motivated to make sense of it all. They can begin to understand the readings as talking about those four issues, but I hope to move fairly quickly to complicating this schema so that they can begin to formulate their own view. As questions about writers, I have focused the readings around issues of difference (race, gender, and class) to consider the variables that can affect the writer's composing process. To highlight some of these differences, we will look at several books, including bell hooks' *Talking Back*, Gates' "The Signifying Monkey," and Kirsch's *Women Writing the Academy*. To focus on questions about readers, we'll examine a variety of theoretical descriptions on audience, starting with Ong's "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction" and ending with Porter's *Audience and Rhetoric*. As we examine research that has asked questions about texts, we will consider LeFevre's *Invention as a Social Act*, Crowley's *The Methodical Memory*, and a series of articles on the rhetoric-as-epistemic debate to explore how writers invent their subject matter. To explore questions about contexts, we'll read Bullock and Trimbur's *The Politics of Writing Instruction: Postsecondary* and Faigley's *Fragments of Rationality*, both of which will provide historical and political context--the material conditions in our field under which the other questions are being studied.

Another motivation for selecting these texts is that they present perspectives on some of the major issues under discussion in the field but they also introduce issues about which these students have some knowledge and (I hope) some interest. For the latter reasons, I want to include texts that explore the margins between composition and literary/critical theory--texts that address issues in composition from the perspective of postmodern and poststructuralist critical theory because many of these students have

some level of acquaintance with such theories. For example, in *Audience and Rhetoric*, James Porter summarizes previous work on audience and develops a new perspective using components of Foucault. His particularly lucid discussion illustrates for them both an application of Foucault's theory and an enlightened understanding of the epistemic relationship between writer and audience.

To try to encourage the students to become more invested in the material they are reading I'm taking an approach that is new to me by having them contribute to the reading material in the course. The last three class meetings will be devoted to reading one article selected by each student during his or her research for the course paper. This will allow students the opportunity to bring into the class topics that we did not cover but which they find particularly interesting. They will choose an article that they find interesting or enlightening, copy it for the rest of the class, and then lead a 15-20 minute discussion of the paper. One problem I can foresee with this idea is that the students might not select the essays that I would have chosen or that I think are the most influential on their particular topics. But I want the emphasis here to be on inviting them to contribute to their own and each other's learning. I hope that by having each student precede the class discussion with a short presentation on why they chose that essay and what aspect of it they found particularly helpful or insightful, they will have what amounts to an opportunity to explain and defend the choice. I think I will also probably preview their choices because I have found that helpful in the past for forestalling major problems.

I have also found that asking students to keep reading journals and formulate discussion questions based on their reading helps to ensure they come to class having read the assignment and generally ready to participate in discussions. However, unless some portion of the class (I typically devote 45 minutes to an hour) is devoted to answering the questions they have prepared, they stop handing in the questions. So I have found it is essential to appreciate and answer a significant number of the questions

they hand in. Generally, they ask excellent questions that introduce some of the issues I want to discuss anyways. So even though this time usually focuses on their insights, it also often furthers discussion of topics that I would have introduced anyways.

So, when I called this presentation "The Subject as Reader and Writer" I was thinking of the students who come into my course thinking of themselves as consumers of English literature and/or producers of creative writing. My goal is to have them leave this course with a more sophisticated understanding of the history and theory of teaching writing and of themselves and the students they teach in Freshman English as writers, readers, and thinkers.

Heather Brodie Graves
Illinois State University
07/14/94

English 402: Introduction to Composition Studies
Fall 1994
(Draft Syllabus)

Dr. Heather Graves
420D Stevenson Hall
Illinois State University
(309) 438-7859
hbgraves@rs6000.cmp.ilstu.edu

Course Description:

This course introduces students to composition as a field of study. Initially, we will investigate how composition fits into the larger discipline of English Studies. Then we will narrow our focus to gain a theoretical and historical overview of composition studies itself. After reading some historical accounts and primary theoretical works in the field, we will explore some of the major issues currently under debate. Finally, we will consider some of the ways in which postmodern critical theory and composition theory overlap in their concern for (among other things) "the subject in discourse," issues of difference and cultural critique, and the politics of writing and reading instruction. This course will explore the intersections between composition and literary/critical theory to help students understand and locate their experiences of reading and writing in historical and social contexts.

This course will be structured as a seminar rather than a lecture. Students will be responsible for reading assigned material and participating in class discussions of that material. To facilitate discussion, students will be required to prepare a couple of questions for each class based on the readings for that meeting. These questions should be drafted and handed in to me by 3:00 p.m. on the Friday afternoon preceding class so that they can be assembled into a handout for class on Monday. Class time will be devoted to answering these questions.

To help students move from consumers of knowledge to producers of knowledge, they will be required to identify an issue in composition studies, read the related research on the topic, and produce some kind of critical synthesis or argument based on the reading. Of the essays you read for your paper, choose one that you think is most interesting and/or addresses issues that we haven't considered in class. Make copies of the article for everyone in class, and distribute the copies the week before your presentation. Prepare a short oral presentation (10-15 min.) on how the article fits into the topic of your paper, and then lead class discussion on the issues discussed in the article (total 30 min.).

Course Objectives:

To provide a theoretical and historical overview of the key issues in the study and teaching of composition.

To offer opportunities to learn and practise the discourse expectations and performances of a professional in English studies, particularly Rhetoric and Composition.

Texts:

Bullock, Richard, and John Trimbur, eds. *The Politics of Writing Instruction: Postsecondary*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1991.

Crowley, Sharon. *The Methodical Memory: Invention in the Current Traditional Rhetoric*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1992.

Faigley, Lester. *Fragments of Rationality: Postmodernity and the Subject of Composition*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittburgh P, 1992.

hooks, bell. *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Boston: South End Press, 19 .

LeFevre, Karen Burke. *Invention as a Social Act*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1986.

Lindemann, Erika, and Gary Tate, eds. *Introduction to Composition Studies*. New York: Oxford, 1991. (ICS)

Murphy, James, ed. *A Short History of Writing Instruction: From Ancient Greece to Twentieth-Century America*. Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press, 1990.

Porter, James. *Audience and Rhetoric*. New York: Prentice Hall, 1991.

Rose, Mike. *Lives on the Boundary*. New York: Penguin, 1989.

Small Course Packet

Assignments:

Discussion questions	10
Journal	20
Proposal, Bibliography	10
Essay	35
Oral Presentation	5
Leading Class Discussions	20

Class Meeting and Reading Schedule

Week 1
Introduction: Constructing Models of Your Composing Process.

Week 2
The Profession: An Introduction

Lunsford, "Rhetoric and Composition."
Lindemann and Tate, *Introduction to Composition Studies*.

Week 3
The Profession: A History

Murphy, *A Short History of Writing Instruction*.
Berlin, "Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Classroom."

Week 4 - (Questions about Writers)
Issues of Difference: Race.

Gates, "The Signifying Monkey." *The Rhetorical Tradition*. Eds. Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg. New York: St. Martins, 1990.

hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*.
Royster, "Intellectual Traditions of Black Women Writers." *The Right To Literacy*. Eds. Andrea Lunsford, Helene Moglen, and James Slevin. New York: MLA, 1990.

Week 5
Issues of Difference: Gender

Jarratt, "Feminism and Composition: The Case for Conflict."
Flynn, "Composing as a Woman" and "Composing 'Composing as a Woman.'"

Ashton-Jones and Thomas, "Composition, Collaboration, and Women's Ways of Knowing: A Conversation with Mary Field Belenky."

Cooper, "Dueling with Dualism: A Response to Interviews with Mary Field Belenky and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak."

Bizzell, "Opportunities for Feminist Research in the History of Rhetoric."

OR
Rubin, Donna Lee. *Gender Influences: Reading Student Texts*.
OR
Kirsch, Gesa. *Women Writing the Academy*.
Selected essays.

Week 6
Issues of Difference: Class, Ethnicity.

Rose, *Lives on the Boundary*.
Zebroski, James. "The English Department and Social Class: Resisting Writing." *The Right To Literacy*. Eds. Andrea Lunsford, Helene Moglen, and James Slevin. New York: MLA, 1990.

Week 7 - (Questions About Readers)
Theories of Audience

Ong, "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction."
Elbow, "Closing My Eyes as I Speak."
Lunsford and Ede, "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked."
Phelps, "Audience and Authorship: The Disappearing Boundary."

Week 8
Theories of Audience

Porter, *Audience and Rhetoric*.

Week 9 - (Questions about Texts)
Theories of Invention
Lefevre, *Invention as a Social Act*

Week 10
Theories of Invention
Crowley, *The Methodical Memory*.

Week 11
Rhetoric as Epistemic Debate

Scott, Robert L. "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic." *The Central States Speech Journal* 18.1 (1967): 9-17.

Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic: Ten Years Later." *The Central States Speech Journal* 27.4 (1967): 258-266.

Leff, Michael C. "In Search of Ariadne's Thread: A Review of the Recent Literature on Rhetorical Theory." *Central States Speech Journal* 29.2 (1978): 73-91.

Gross, Alan. "Rhetoric of Science without Constraints." *Rhetorica* 9.4 (Autumn 1991): 283-299.

McGuire, J. E., and Trevor Melia. "The Rhetoric of the Radical Rhetoric of Science." *Rhetorica* 9.4 (Autumn 1991): 30-316.

Week 12 - (Questions about Context)
Issues in the Profession

Faigley, *Fragments of Rationality*.

Week 13
Issues in the Profession

Bullock and Trimbur, *The Politics of Writing Instruction: Postsecondary*.

Week 14
Student Presentations and Discussion: Selected Essays on Various Topics

Week 15
Student Presentations and Discussion: Selected Essays on Various Topics

Week 16
Student Presentations and Discussion: Selected Essays on Various Topics

Last Friday of Classes: Final Papers due.